

On page 13 line 1 replace "Claims"

with -- I CLAIM: --

IN THE FIGURES:

Replace Fig. 4 with the new Fig. 4 accompanying this amendment.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Delete claims 1 through 13 without prejudice and enter new claims 14 through 28 as follows:

14. A surgical instrument for the removal of tissue, the instrument comprising:

an outer tube having an opening in a distal region thereof for accepting the tissue;

an inner tube disposed within said outer tube, said inner tube having a rigid proximal region for transmitting forces or momenta acting on said inner tube proximal region to a distal region of said inner tube, said the inner tube having a flexible region between said inner tube proximal region and said inner tube distal region, said inner tube comprising a wall in said flexible region, said wall having a slit in said flexible region, said slit winding in a helical path about a longitudinal axis of said inner tube, said slit meandering back and forth with respect to said helical path; and

a cutting tool disposed at said distal region of said inner tube for cutting the tissue subjected to an

influence of said cutting tool in a vicinity of said opening in said distal region of said outer tube.

15. The instrument of claim 14, wherein said meandering slit defines alternating teeth and recesses, each recess having an associated tooth and each tooth being disposed in a recess, said teeth and said recesses having a shape which prohibits an axial slippage of said teeth out of said recesses.
16. The instrument of claim 14, wherein said opening in said outer tube for acceptance of the tissue is disposed in a distal end region of said outer tube, and wherein said cutting tool is disposed at a distal end of said inner tube.
17. The instrument of claim 14, wherein said slit has a width between approximately 0.05 mm to approximately 1 mm and said wall of said inner tube has a thickness between approximately 0.1 mm to approximately 0.7 mm.
18. The instrument of claim 17, wherein said thickness is between approximately 0.15 mm to approximately 0.5 mm.
19. The instrument of claim 14, wherein said helical path has a pitch between approximately 0.5 mm/winding to approximately 4 mm/winding.
20. The instrument of claim 14, further comprising means for connecting said cutting tool to said distal region of said inner tube.
21. The instrument of claim 14, wherein said cutting tool is integral with said inner tube.

22. The instrument of claim 14, wherein said outer tube extends in a linear fashion in a proximal region of said outer tube, and wherein said cutting tool is disposed in said distal region of said outer tube, said outer tube distal region displaced from a line defined by said proximal region of said outer tube, wherein said flexible region of said inner tube is disposed in a transitional region extending between and joining said outer tube proximal region and said outer tube distal region.

23. The instrument of claim 22, wherein said outer tube distal region extends in a linear fashion.

24. A tube, comprising:

a rigid proximal region;
a distal region; and
a flexible region disposed between and connecting said rigid proximal region and said distal region, said flexible region with a tube wall having a slit, said slit winding in a helical path about a longitudinal axis of said tube and meandering back and forth with respect to said helical path.

25. The tube of claim 24, wherein said meandering slit defines alternating teeth and recesses, wherein each recess has an associated tooth and each tooth is disposed in a recess, said teeth and said recesses having a shape which prohibits an axial slippage of said teeth out of said recesses.

26. The tube of claim 24, wherein said slit has a width between approximately 0.05 mm to approximately 1 mm, said tube wall